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Castro's Puerto Rican Obsession

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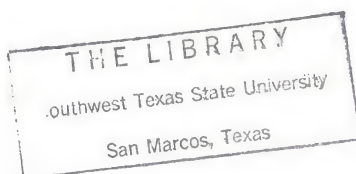
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CASTRO'S PUERTO RICAN OBSESSION

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PREFACE

By

Michael A. Ledeen

It may come as a surprise to the general reader that Fidel Castro has devoted so much time and energy to the "cause" of Puerto Rican independence. Yet, as this monograph documents in considerable detail, the Cuban dictator has done precisely that, and his commitment to Puerto Rico's independence from the United States has not flagged, even though only a tiny fraction of the island's population supports it, and even though there is precious little enthusiasm for it outside Cuba (indeed there has been a decisive shift against Castro, even in such friendly bodies as the Non-Aligned Movement).

Castro's passion for the Puerto Rican issue has become a personal and national obsession. From the first days of the seizure of power in Havana, it has been one of the major themes of Cuban propaganda — and, as readers of this monograph will see, one of the major subversive activities of the Cuban regime *within the continental United States*.

American law enforcement officials have discovered active Cuban involvement in the terrorist activities of *Los Macheteros* (the "machete wielders"), including the infamous robbery of the Wells Fargo Depot in Hartford, Connecticut on September 12, 1983. The robbers made off with seven million dollars, some of which ended up in the hands of Cuban intelligence agents on the island. One of the ringleaders of the operation was "considered by U.S. intelligence sources to be an agent of Cuba's General Intelligence Directorate (DGI), and the organizer of Puerto Rico's terrorist movement. . . . It is the Macheteros who have claimed responsibility for the Wells Fargo robbery, but it is clear from Mr. Filiberto Ojeda Ríos' involvement that behind them stands the DGI."

One of the suspects, Víctor Manuel Gerena, is on the ten most wanted list released by the FBI. The Justice Department has said that he has been given "sanctuary" in Cuba. The *Macheteros* have a long history of violence, including bombings, the destruction of National Guard aircraft and the ambush of a Navy bus in Puerto Rico in which several servicemen were killed.

Finally, Castro's limited resources for propaganda and diplomacy go in large part to support demands for Puerto Rican independence, whether in the official newspaper of the regime, *Granma*, on the powerful inter-

national radio broadcasts that emanate 24 hours a day from Havana, or in the halls of the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Yet with all this, Castro has utterly failed to generate solid support for his cause, even in organizations such as the Non-Aligned Movement. While many of the members give token support to the idea of Puerto Rican independence, within the U.N. many of those same countries abandon Castro (and their own previously expressed positions). In 1982, for example, Castro was outvoted in the United Nations by almost two-to-one *within the ranks of the Non-Aligned Movement*. The only votes he received came from the Soviet bloc countries. Within Puerto Rico itself, only 3.5% of the voters supported the two separatist parties.*

Given all of this, one might have expected Castro to have dropped the cause from his agenda, but he has persisted in the campaign. What can explain his dogged determination to promote Puerto Rican independence? Most foreign policy is derived from multiple considerations rather than from a single cause, and there are many reasons why Puerto Rican independence appeals to Havana:

- it enables Cuban (and other Communist) propagandists to sustain the myth of American “imperialism” in Puerto Rico, even though the Puerto Ricans are self-governing, and have repeatedly expressed little interest in giving up the Island’s association with the United States;
- it extends Cuba’s support for international terrorism into the United States, from where the support for terrorism can be expanded at some future date;
- it maintains a political threat against American naval power in the Caribbean region, with a faint hope of some day extending Cuban military power directly to Puerto Rico;
- it enables the Cuban intelligence service (DGI) and, because of the intimate relationship with the Soviet Union, the KGB as well, to operate within the United States under cover of supporting a “liberation movement.”

As one looks at this list, it is clear that Castro is motivated by considerations quite different from his announced one, for the advantages to him have nothing to do with an honest belief in the rightness of the separatist cause. Rather, Cuban support for the Puerto Rican independence movement is one more piece in a global strategy designed to advance Soviet interests.

It is essential that the people of the United States pay attention to the activities of the Puerto Rican marxists, for we may one day find ourselves forced to combat this “movement,” and we should be in no doubt about its true nature. We would, of course, be concerned about a terrorist organization even if it had no outside support, and we would react vigorously to Castro’s lies about the status of Puerto Rico and the desires of the people there even if there were no *Macheteros*; but we need to be doubly concerned about a movement which is being used by the Soviet empire to attack us in our own hemisphere, and even in our own country.

Michael Ledeen
Washington, DC
March, 1987

* See Voting Patterns Chart on page 38.

CASTRO'S PUERTO RICAN OBSESSION

In 1985, during a quiet morning in Luquillo, a small town east of the Puerto Rican capital of San Juan, FBI agents surrounded a house belonging to Filiberto Ojeda Ríos. As federal agents approached, they were met by machine gun fire coming from inside. Before Ojeda Ríos was disarmed, one FBI agent had been seriously injured. Simultaneously, throughout the island, in Dallas, Texas and Cambridge, Massachusetts, FBI special agents arrested twelve other Puerto Ricans in what was termed a major anti-terrorist operation.

All of those arrested belonged to *Los Macheteros*, or "the machete wielders," a Puerto Rican terrorist organization, trained and equipped by Fidel Castro, which uses violence and terrorism in the attempt to obtain Puerto Rican independence from the United States. Ojeda Ríos and the other members of the group were arrested for their involvement in the September 12, 1983 robbery of the Wells Fargo Bank in West Hartford, Connecticut. The suspects stole approximately seven million dollars. It was the second largest robbery in the history of the United States. A substantial portion of the money and one of the suspects, Víctor Manuel Gerena, are now in Cuba.¹

The Grand Jury indictment, filed August 23, 1985 in the U.S. District Court for Connecticut, charged seventeen Puerto Ricans with committing the robbery and shipping most of the money along with Gerena to Cuba, via Mexico. The eight-count indictment also states, that "...on or about June 29, 1984 the defendant Filiberto Ojeda Ríos was advised by a representative of the Cuban government known only as 'Coma' that a portion of the stolen Wells Fargo money remained in the custody and care of the Cuban government."²

The United States government is aware of Fidel Castro's direct involvement with this particular case. Following the arrests, FBI Director William H. Webster said: "We know that Víctor Manuel Gerena has been given sanctuary in Cuba. Cuba's aggressive support of terrorism has not

¹ James Brooke, "13 Held in \$7 Million Connecticut Theft," *The New York Times*, August 31, 1985, p. 26. After this study was completed, *The Hartford Courant*, January 3, 1987 reported that "Jorge A. Farinacci, a labor lawyer representing Union employees at the Dupont Plaza Hotel and a defendant in the \$7 million West Hartford Wells Fargo robbery case, Friday [January 2, 1987] rejected the possibility the Union was involved in the fire that killed more than 90 people in San Juan."

² United States Federal District Court of Connecticut, *United States v. Víctor Manuel Gerena*, Grand Jury H-85-1, filed August 23, 1985, pp. 1-7.

gone unnoticed.”³ Noting the connection between the *Macheteros* and the Castro regime, Attorney General Edwin Meese III stated that: “This indictment is a signal to terrorists and their supporters that our response to their cowardly acts of violence will be decisive.”⁴

The exact nature of Castro’s link to Gerena was determined by the FBI, using methods such as telephone wiretaps. According to *The Hartford Courant*, “Special agent Diader Rosario . . . taped conversations during the past year between a Cuban operative in Mexico City (presumably ‘Coma’) and at least 13 members of . . . *Los Macheteros* concerning Gerena’s whereabouts and the Cuban government’s support for the group.”⁵

While Víctor Gerena is regarded by many as the mastermind behind the Wells Fargo robbery, other analysts argue that Filiberto Ojeda Ríos is actually the real leader. Columnist Daniel James believes this second hypothesis. He has written that Ojeda Ríos “is considered by U.S. intelligence sources to be an agent of Cuba’s General Intelligence Directorate (DGI, the Cuban KGB) and the organizer of Puerto Rico’s terrorist movement . . . It is the *Macheteros* who have claimed responsibility for the Wells Fargo robbery, but it is clear from Mr. Ojeda Ríos’ involvement that behind them stands the DGI.”⁶ The DGI and the KGB are known to work closely together.

Cuban support is crucial for the *Macheteros*, the FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation) and other Puerto Rican terrorist organizations. During the investigation of the Wells Fargo robbery, federal authorities determined that Castro’s aid consisted of providing advanced training in Cuba and, when needed, sanctuary for terrorists like Gerena. Of greater concern to law enforcement officials was the discovery of “roomfuls” of sophisticated weapons, including rocket launchers, explosives and M-16 submachine guns. These weapons had been abandoned by U.S. troops in South Vietnam; they were recovered by the Viet Cong, sent to Cuba and then shipped to Puerto Rico. Bomb plots and political assassinations were also discovered.⁷

In return for his aid, Castro receives substantial amounts of hard cur-

rency, which he desperately needs to keep the Cuban economy afloat. For most Americans, the Wells Fargo robbery is just an isolated incident which, while unfortunate, is not a national security issue. To those familiar with the situation, however, this is yet another example of Fidel Castro’s support for Puerto Rican terrorists, and of his attempts to disrupt the relationship between Puerto Rico and United States.

Because of incidents like the Wells Fargo robbery, the United States is becoming increasingly concerned about Castro’s efforts to promote revolution on the island of Puerto Rico, which has been for generations a democratically governed commonwealth. Given its political stability, Puerto Rico has not been a matter of strategic concern to Washington. However, the situation has changed because of Cuban efforts to manipulate Puerto Rico’s status *vis á vis* the United States, and because of Puerto Rican terrorist organizations which have caused unrest in the Caribbean and embarrassment to the American government.

Over the last twenty-five years, Fidel Castro has shown a peculiar obsession with Puerto Rico. His regime has devoted an inordinately large amount of time and energy to “the Puerto Rican question.” Castro has repeatedly said that “solidarity with the people of Puerto Rico” is a basic policy of his government.⁸

Havana’s principal propaganda organs, Radio Havana, the official newspaper *Granma*, and *Prensa Latina*, their international propaganda agency, routinely depict Puerto Rico as an economically destitute society — the exploited victim of U.S. colonialism, militarism and imperialism. *Granma* has colored its tendentious reporting with headlines such as “Puerto Rico: Imperialist Stronghold in Latin America,” and “Puerto Rico: The Yankee Colony in Latin America.”⁹

By supporting Puerto Rican terrorist organizations and condemning the existing relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico in international forums, Fidel Castro seeks to drive a wedge between the United States and Puerto Rico. Castro says that his support for the “national liberation” of Puerto Rico is “non-negotiable,” even if this position should affect Cuban-American relations in a negative way. This paper chronicles Castro’s interference in U.S./Puerto Rican affairs, and analyzes Cuba’s objectives in promoting unrest in the United States and the Caribbean Basin.

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Press Advisory*, (United States Department of Justice), August 20, 1985, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵ Dane Leshner, “FBI Says Taps Show Cuba Link,” *The Hartford Courant*, September 4, 1985, p. 5.

⁶ Daniel James, “Wells Fargo Suspect Linked to Cuba,” *The Washington Times*, September 3, 1985, p. 5.

⁷ Leshner, *op. cit.* p. 7.

⁸ Jan K. Black, Howard I. Blustein, J. David Edwards, Kathryn T. Johnston and David S. McMorris, *Area Handbook for Cuba*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976) p. 345.

⁹ *Granma Weekly Review*, November 26, 1967, p. 12 and September 23, 1974, p. 10.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Cuba and Puerto Rico have a long history of friendly relations and anti-colonial cooperation. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Puerto Rican patriots and intellectuals played a major role in the liberation of Cuba from Spanish rule. Puerto Rican intellectuals in the United States were of invaluable assistance to the Cuban patriot José Martí in organizing and directing the revolutionary struggle in Cuba. The principal journal of the Cuban Revolutionary Party was *Patria*; its editor and moving force was Martí. One of his chief assistants was the Puerto Rican writer Sotero Figueroa who not only wrote for the journal, but also owned the press on which it was printed. Seven Puerto Ricans were members of the Board of Directors of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, which included a Puerto Rican branch several hundred members strong. Among the most distinguished Puerto Ricans working abroad for the Cuban cause were Eugenio María de Hostos, Ramón Emeterio Betances and Lola Rodríguez de Tío.¹⁰

According to historian Antonio S. Pedreira, the Cuban struggle for independence had no propagandist more active, no revolutionary more enthusiastic, no friend more sincere and interested than Hostos.¹¹ It was Hostos who raised funds, whipped up patriotic sentiment, organized committees, founded publications and gave lectures on the Cuban cause throughout the Americas. As was written by Figueroa, "One can assert, without fear of contradiction, that no Cuban propagandist did as much for Cuba as the Antillian (Puerto Rican) Eugenio María de Hostos."¹²

Further information on Hostos' contribution to the Cuban cause comes from historian Joaquín Freire, who writes:

Already by the year 1870, Hostos was a member in New York of the Society for Aid to Cuba. The following year he founded another similar institution with an identical name in Chile. In the same year in Buenos Aires he organized the Cuban Pro-Independence Society. In 1875, the Cuban Clubs of Puerto Rico, and the Dominican

Republic, named him an honorary member. In 1895 he was corresponding member of the Cuban propaganda center, Martí, in Caracas, and the same year agent of the Board of Directors of the Revolutionary Party of Cuba and Puerto Rico of New York, in Santiago de Chile. In 1898, he was New York representative of Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrant groups in Caracas.¹³

Betances served as the representative of the Cuban revolutionary movement in France, where he succeeded in freeing a number of deported Cubans who went to Spain and Spanish Africa, including two Cuban generals. After Cuba became independent, he was designated Agent of the Republic of Cuba to France.

Perhaps the leading Nineteenth Century female intellectual from Puerto Rico was Lola Rodríguez de Tío. She used her considerable writing talents to promote the cause of an independent Cuba during the twenty-five years she lived on the island.¹⁴

Many more Puerto Ricans took up arms to advance the cause of Cuban independence from Spain. Although no exact figures are available, it is estimated that hundreds of Puerto Ricans fought for Cuba. Many died in battle, some attained high military rank, and, subsequently, important civilian positions. Of these, the best known was Juan Rius Rivera, who led Cuban troops in numerous battles and rose to the rank of Major-General in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he held numerous high government posts, including Governor of the province of Havana. He also became the special Cuban envoy to Central and South America, and a member of the Constituent Assembly which drew up the Cuban Constitution of 1901.¹⁵

Prior to independence, the Cuban and Puerto Rican delegations to the Spanish *Cortes* (legislature) worked closely together in Madrid. They succeeded in bringing about the abolition of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1878. In 1897 these delegations obtained a Charter of Autonomy for the two islands. The Charter, which was not granted until the Cubans had already begun hostilities against Spain, provided a considerable measure of self-government to the two colonies and was beginning to take effect when the United States landed troops in Cuba to aid Cuban revolutionaries. In the course of the same operation, the United States

¹⁰ Joaquín Freire, *Presencia de Puerto Rico en la Historia de Cuba*, (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1966).

¹¹ "Hostos, Ciudadano de América," in *Obras de Antonio Pedreira*, Vol. II, (San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1970), p. 555.

¹² Sotero Figueroa, "Eugenio María de Hostos," *La Discusión*, October 4, 1903, p. 8.

¹³ Freire, *Op. cit.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵ General Manuel Piedra, *Juan Rius Rivera y la Independencia de Cuba*, (Havana: El Siglo XX, 1945).

also occupied Puerto Rico. After the war ended in 1899, there was a brief period of U.S. military rule. Cuba became an independent republic in 1902, although the Platt Amendment put restraints on Cuban sovereignty. Puerto Rico, meanwhile, was placed under the control of a U.S. civilian Governor, pursuant to the Foraker Act of 1901.¹⁶

The Treaty of Paris, which ended the War of 1898, called for the acquisition of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines by the United States, but not for the occupation of Cuba. The historian Mario Lazo has written that:

What is not generally remembered—and is a circumstance that Castro never mentions—is that one of the first steps taken by the Chief of the Spanish peace mission was formally to request that the United States annex Cuba. The Pearl of the Antilles' . . . had bestowed many rich gifts on the mother country. More Spaniards resided there than in any other distant area; more Spanish capital was invested there. Now, in Paris, the vanquished were asking their conquerors to protect by annexation Spanish citizens and investments in Cuba. . . .¹⁷

The United States would not agree to this request. It had committed itself to Cuba's independence. The American forces were withdrawn from the island on May 20, 1902.

With the establishment of Cuba as a Republic, and Puerto Rico as a U.S. territory, relations between the two islands diminished while individual ties to the United States intensified. Contact was maintained through educational exchanges, economic relations (trade, industry, banking, etc.), visits to friends and relatives, and the migration of Puerto Rican workers to Cuba. The Cuban census showed increasing numbers of Puerto Ricans residing in Cuba from the turn of the century throughout the 1920's. These figures did not include those Puerto Ricans in the armed forces who, by nature of their military service, were treated as Cuban citizens. Because of growing political instability and deteriorating economic conditions in Cuba, Puerto Rican emigration to that island slowed significantly during the 1930's.

¹⁶ Edward J. Berbusse, S.J. *The United States in Puerto Rico: 1898 - 1900*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1966) pp. 111-190.

¹⁷ Mario Lazo, *Dagger in The Heart: American Foreign Policy Failures in Cuba*, (New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1968) p. 34.

During the next two decades, political conditions in Puerto Rico improved greatly. Puerto Rico encouraged a democratic government responsive to the needs of its citizenry. Elections were held regularly, freedom of speech and of the press was granted and labor unions thrived. Most importantly, in free and open elections the Puerto Rican people have voted against endorsing the "independence movement." Throughout this time, relations between Cuba and the United States remained cordial. It was not until Fidel Castro seized power that the status of Puerto Rico became an issue between the United States and Cuba.

CASTRO'S INVOLVEMENT WITH PUERTO RICO

Fidel Castro explains his regime's interest in Puerto Rican independence movements as repayment of an historic debt. His active support for Puerto Rican independence is based upon some abstract "principles" of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), not upon the will of the majority of the Puerto Rican electorate which is clearly opposed to changes in the island's status.¹⁸

Dr. Robert Pastor, the senior staff member responsible for Latin American and Caribbean affairs on President Jimmy Carter's National Security Council, traces Castro's involvement with Puerto Rico back to his days as a student at the University of Havana where he headed an organization which promoted Puerto Rican independence. Pastor recalls that:

In discussing Puerto Rico in separate conversations with Cuba's highest officials, I found that only one could be said to be genuinely obsessed with the issue, and that person was Fidel Castro. He pursues the issue of Puerto Rican independence as if Cuba's own independence depended on it, and in some sense it does. . . . Although Cuban tactics on Puerto Rico may change somewhat, as long as Fidel Castro rules, Cuba will remain unyielding on this issue, and it could become dangerous if Puerto Rico moves toward statehood.¹⁹

¹⁸ Barry B. Levine, *The New Cuban Presence in the Caribbean*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), p. 23.

¹⁹ Robert A. Pastor, "Puerto Rico as an International Issue," in Richard J. Bloomfield, ed., *Puerto Rico: The Search for a National Policy*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 104, 116-117.

Puerto Rico is constantly on the mind of the Cuban dictator, who refers to it incessantly. A case in point; during a speech about El Salvador and Nicaragua in September 1981, Castro added the following sentence: "Our sympathy, our support and our encouragement are also needed by our brothers . . . people of Puerto Rico, subjected to the famous Yankee colonialism."²⁰

The main Puerto Rican political organization tied to Castro is the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), which has an office in Havana. PSP members travel regularly between San Juan and Havana, especially its past secretary-general, the self-professed Marxist-Leninist Juan Mari Bras.²¹ In addition, representatives of the Castro regime visited Puerto Rico under the auspices of the PSP. Havana obtained positions for PSP members with the secretariats of international organizations as well as observer status for the party at conferences of the Non-Aligned Movement. Often at these international meetings, the PSP writes the first drafts of Cuban resolutions condemning "U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico." On many occasions, Castro's government has circulated statements of the PSP, misrepresenting them as official United Nations documents. In other cases, Havana has incorporated the language of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party into official Cuban documents.

The time and energy expended by the Cuban government on behalf of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party is not entirely altruistic. At the sixth summit meeting of the nations of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Havana in September, 1979, Fidel Castro had Juan Mari Bras stand up and applaud "Grenada's liberation (by Maurice Bishop) as well as the Nicaraguan victory over Somoza."²² The official propaganda organ of the PSP is *Claridad*, whose former editor, Carlos Rivera Lugo, was the PSP representative in Havana.

The Puerto Rican Socialist Party has supported pro-independence activities both in Puerto Rico and on the U.S. mainland, and it is widely suspected that some fringe members of the party may actually belong to terrorist groups that take part in acts of violence. For a long time

the Castro regime has aided Third World insurgencies in "unconventional warfare;" his support for Puerto Rican terrorist groups is an aspect of this policy.²³

In 1982, the PSP organized a campaign urging Puerto Ricans to violate the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba for the XIV Central American and Caribbean Games. Some two-hundred Puerto Ricans attended the games in Havana. Cuban authorities "cooperated" by not stamping the passports of the Puerto Ricans, which made prosecution of the violators by the U.S. government more difficult. The PSP was able to embarrass the U.S. Justice Department, while at the same time helping the Castro government spread its propaganda to Puerto Rican guests. Additionally, the PSP has served as a "clearing-house" which decides whether to grant travel permits to Puerto Ricans wishing to visit Cuba.

Cuba also maintains contact with the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), whose political orientation is social democratic. This ideological difference puts them at odds with the PSP and the Communist Party of Cuba. However, since all three advocate independence, the PIP has worked with Cuban delegations at international conferences on various resolutions calling for Puerto Rican independence, particularly at the United Nations.²⁴

For many years the president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, Rubén Berrios, avoided going to Cuba, apparently not wishing to be closely associated with Castro's brand of Marxism. But in late December, 1982, he travelled to Cuba to meet Fidel Castro. It was on this occasion that Berrios stated, "Latin America can never be free while Puerto Rico is not free."²⁵

Cuban officials also maintain close contact with radical groups in the United States, mainly through the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. The Mission has reportedly aided and abetted such "Puerto Rican" terrorist and protest groups as the FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation), The Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, and the *Macheteros*, as

²⁰ H. Michael Erismán, "Cuba's International Relations: The Anatomy of a Nationalistic Foreign Policy," Opening Speech, Sixty-eighth Conference of the Inter-parliamentary Union, Havana, September 15, 1981, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985) p. 159.

²¹ Samuel-René Quiñones, "Mari: Castro Still Dedicated to P.R. Independence," *The San Juan Star*, June 11, 1977, p. 6.

²² W. Raymond Duncan, "Moscow, the Caribbean and Central America," in Robert Wesson, ed., *Communism in Central America and the Caribbean* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), p. 19.

²³ Jorge I. Domínguez, "Cuban Military and National Security Policies," in Martin Weinstein, ed., *Revolutionary Cuba in the World Arena*, (Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979) p. 91.

²⁴ For a detailed examination of the various Marxist organizations in Puerto Rico, refer to George Volsky's "Puerto Rico," in Richard F. Staar, ed., *1984 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), pp. 170-171.

²⁵ Oscar Ferrer, "No Puede Haber América Latina Libre Mientras Puerto Rico No Sea Libre," *Granma*, December 21, 1982, p. 3.

well as the *Venceremos Brigade* and the Weathermen group. According to then doctoral candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, Austin Linsley, "the Cuban delegation has been a conduit for transmitting information and documents from supporters of independence on the island to the United Nations."²⁶

CASTRO AIDS PUERTO RICAN TERRORIST GROUPS

Castro began to encourage terrorist activity less than a year after coming to power in 1959. These actions have concerned every U.S. President since Dwight D. Eisenhower, because U.S. policy-makers realized that Cuba's support for Puerto Rican terrorist groups was part of its attempt to undermine U.S. security interests.²⁷

The most well-known Puerto Rican terrorist group is the FALN [Armed Forces for National Liberation] which achieved notoriety in the 1970's. A *New York Times* story reported in 1977 that from the group's formation in 1974, FALN had been responsible for 49 individual bombings which resulted in 4 dead and 65 wounded.²⁸ The last time FALN claimed responsibility for terrorist incidents was 1982. The FBI believes that this organization has been responsible for causing extensive damage and over 130 casualties.²⁹

Although often referred to as an exclusively Puerto Rican terrorist group, the FALN in fact comprises activists of mixed nationality (predominantly of Puerto Rican extraction, but also other Hispanics and some non-Hispanics) who are based in New York and Chicago. Most of its Puerto Rican members were born in the United States; some have never visited Puerto Rico; some do not even speak Spanish. They know little about Puerto Rican history or culture. It is more appropriate to call the FALN a U.S. terrorist group which supports Puerto Rican independence with the aid of Fidel Castro.

²⁶ Austin Linsley, "U.S.-Cuban Relations: The Role of Puerto Rico," in Cole Blasier and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, eds., *Cuba in the World*, (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 122.

²⁷ *Public Papers on the President: Dwight D. Eisenhower*, National Archives and Records Service, (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1961), pp. 134-136.

²⁸ "FALN Tied to 49 Bombings Since Aug. '74," *The New York Times*, February 20, 1977, p. 33.

²⁹ Terrorist Research and Analytical Center, *FBI Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in the United States: 1982* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1982) pp. B28-B31.

But some FALN activists do periodically travel to Puerto Rico, where it is believed they keep in touch with Marxist groups on the island. Their main support, however, reportedly comes from Havana, where they maintain offices, and from the Cuban Mission to the United Nations. Article 12 of the Cuban Constitution sanctions aid to "wars of national liberation,"³⁰ and members of the FALN consider themselves soldiers in an armed struggle to "liberate" Puerto Rico.

At the end of 1974 several "bombings" which were attributed to FALN occurred in New York City, culminating with the tragic January 25, 1975 explosion at Fraunces Tavern in lower Manhattan. At the time, Governor Rafael Hernández Colón stated that the FALN "is known throughout Latin America and is related to Cuban subversives."³¹

In October, 1975 the Puerto Rican Information Service in Washington issued a statement which noted that, according to "well-informed sources," the FALN was operating in close association with Castro's DGI (General Directorate of Intelligence) to produce "a campaign of urban terrorism like the *Tupamaros* did in Uruguay."³² This declaration identified FALN terrorist Filiberto Inocencio Ojeda Ríos (now of the *Macheteros*) as having received training in Cuba through the *Venceremos Brigade*. According to the Chief of the Bomb Squad Division for Dade County, Florida:

Americans who joined the *Venceremos Brigade* to help with Premier Fidel Castro's sugar cane harvest were taught how to make bombs while in Cuba . . . The Puerto Ricans travel to Cuba as tourists or on good will missions and learn how to make bombs. They come back, and you know what happens . . . They learned how to make bombs in Cuba. There is no doubt about that.³³

The following month, a U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee report stated that Ojeda Ríos went to Cuba in 1961. There he was recruited by Cuban Intelligence and sent back to Puerto Rico. According to the report, Ojeda supplied technical expertise for the preparation of explosive devices

³⁰ "Constitución de la República" Art. 12(b); in *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Edición Especial*, No. 2, February 24, 1976.

³¹ Selwyn Raab, "Inquiry on Bombing Put Under Direction of Detective Chief," *The New York Times*, January 30, 1975, p. 23.

³² "U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act, Puerto Rico," in *The Communist Threat to the U.S. Through the Caribbean*, 90th Congress/2d Session, pp. 1368-1373.

³³ UPI Wire Service, "Left-Wing Bombing is Linked to Cuba," October 26, 1975.

against U.S.-owned supermarkets in Puerto Rico, starting in 1967. Ojeda allegedly helped to establish the *Movimiento Independiente Revolucionario Armado* (MIRA), which carried out extensive campaigns of terror in the resort area around San Juan in 1969. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's, the Castro regime provided asylum and shelter to Puerto Rican radicals, openly paying tribute to them.³⁴

The treatment granted to the four so-called "Puerto Rican Nationalists" pardoned by President Jimmy Carter in 1979, is a case in point. Four members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, Lolita Lebrón, Rafael Cancel, Irving Flores and Oscar Collazo had been arrested and jailed in connection with an attack on the U.S. House of Representatives in March, 1954, when five House members were wounded. After their release, the Cuban government, invited Lebrón, Collazo and Cancel to Cuba in November, 1979 where they were awarded two Cuban medals of honor, The National Order of Playa Girón and the 20th Anniversary Medal, by Fidel Castro.³⁵

Other U.S. organizations which maintain ties to Cuba through the Cuban Mission to the United Nations are: the U.S. Section of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party; the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee (formerly the Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization); and the United Front for the Defense of Puerto Rican Political Prisoners. The last group is an umbrella organization, formed in 1972 in New York, consisting of: the *Coalición Puertorriqueña*; *El Comité*; *Machete*; *Resistencia Puertorriqueña*; the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers' Organization (formerly the Young Lords); the Young Disciples; the Defense Committee for Eduardo Cruz, Carlos Feliciano and Humberto Pagán³⁶; The Hartford Connecticut Defense Committee; and the Young Lords National Defense Committee.

On May 19, 1976, Governor Rafael Hernández Colón spoke at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. He openly accused the Castro regime of engaging in subversive activities in Puerto Rico. Asserting that Havana was training and aiding terrorists to overthrow the government in San Juan, the Governor stated that: "Terrorist activities in Puerto Rico

are being sponsored and they are within the mantle of Castro's communist objectives in general . . . There is a clear and undeniable link to Castro." He went on to say, "I don't think that the Cubans can realistically promote a successful revolution in Puerto Rico . . . But they can make trouble for us. They can, as they have done in the past, train these people in terrorist activities."³⁷ While speaking of the link between Puerto Rican groups which have turned to terrorism and their ties to Cuba, the Governor specifically mentioned the PSP.³⁸

Later in 1976, Governor Hernández Colón charged Cuba with involvement with a Dominican Republic group that Puerto Rican authorities accused of robbing several banks on the island in order to finance terrorist activities. The Governor's allegations were based on a confession. One of those arrested admitted that he had spent seven years in Cuba where he was taught guerrilla tactics. After hearing this testimony, the Governor paid a visit to police headquarters, where he inspected the explosive matériel, arms, communications and radar equipment, police uniforms and other evidence confiscated from the Dominican group. These items, it was determined, had been supplied by Havana, or obtained with Castro's aid.³⁹

Puerto Rican concern over the rise of Castro-promoted terrorism quickly spread to American policy-makers, journalists and scholars. In testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, Daniel James, a journalist and expert on the Cuban connection, noted that:

Cuban-directed and Cuban-inspired terrorism and intelligence activities in this country are increasing . . . Less than three weeks ago, on February 28 [1982], four bombs exploded on Wall Street. They were thrown by the FALN . . . which claimed responsibility for the "bombings." It calls them 'a strike against the imperialist forces that are suppressing the Puerto Rican people.' The FALN is a creature of the [DGI], which organized that terrorist group on American soil in 1974. The DGI, in turn, is a satellite of the Soviet intelligence service known as the KGB.⁴⁰

³⁴ U.S. Congress, *Terrorist Connection: Activity in Puerto Rico—Castro's Hand in Puerto Rico and U.S. Terrorism*, 94th Congress/2d Session, pp. 423-426.

³⁵ Gabriel Molina, "Fidel Presents Playa Girón National Order," *Granma Weekly Review*, November 11, 1979, p. 5.

³⁶ Cruz, Feliciano and Pagán were Puerto Rican activists implicated in various bombing charges in 1971. See Arnold Lubasch, "Wiretap Decision Upset on Appeal," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1982, p.45.

³⁷ Harry Turner, "RHC Says Cuba Trains PSP in Terrorism," *The San Juan Star*, May 20, 1976, pp. 1,18.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁹ "Denuncian que Cuba ha estado envuelta en el terrorismo que ha sufrido Puerto Rico," *Diario Las Américas*, January 1, 1982, p. 1.

⁴⁰ U.S. Congress, Senate, Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism, Committee on the Judiciary, *The Role of Cuba in International Terrorism and Subversion*, 98th Congress/1st Session, pp. 161 passim.

According to James' testimony before the Congressional subcommittee, Ojeda Ríos is the principal actor in the Castro/FALN connection.

In 1967, Ojeda Ríos founded the first of Puerto Rico's new terrorist groups, the Independent Armed Revolutionary Movement, (MIRA) whose members received training and arms in Cuba. After a series of 'bombings' the police finally broke up MIRA and Ojeda Ríos was arrested. After jumping bail, he headed for New York and was assigned to the DGI station (which was operating under the auspices of the Cuban Mission to the United Nations) where he organized the FALN with remnants of the old MIRA group...

James continued by stating:

The Cuban Mission to the United Nations, is honeycombed with DGI and other Cuban intelligence personnel. An estimated 75 per cent of its normal 50-person staff, which is itself unusually large for a country the size of Cuba, is estimated to belong to the DGI and other Cuban intelligence agencies, such as the Americas Department, the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the People [ICAP], and so on.⁴¹

The *Macheteros*, an extension of the two terrorist organizations established earlier (MIRA and FALN) began its activities in 1978, and since that time has continued to be one of the most active and violent of the Puerto Rican terrorist organizations. On August 25, 1978 the *Macheteros* killed a police officer in the Puerto Rican town of Naguabo near Las Piedras. In December of the following year they ambushed a U.S. Navy bus killing two Navy men and injuring nine others. They claimed responsibility for the January 12, 1981 destruction of nine Air National Guard planes on the island, as well as for a rocket attack on the U.S. Courthouse in Old San Juan, January 25, 1985. The rockets, as well as other armaments used in previous attacks and those confiscated during the Wells Fargo arrests, were traced back to the Vietnam War and were probably obtained from Cuba.⁴²

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

⁴² Clyde Haberman, "Rifle of Soviet Type Tied to Bus Ambush," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1979, p. 23.

The Cuban connection, although suspected by many, did not become certainty until the *Machetero* attack on the Navy bus in 1979. During that investigation, authorities found conclusive evidence regarding an arms link to Castro's Cuba. On December 5, 1979, Federal officials announced that a Soviet AK-47 rifle had been used in the attack which had occurred two days earlier. One FBI spokesman said that, "In my experience, I have never heard of an AK-47 being used before on the island (Puerto Rico)." He told reporters that the gun was probably manufactured in either Czechoslovakia or the People's Republic of China, and probably supplied by Cuba.⁴³

Because of the clandestine nature of terrorist networks, it is not possible to prove that Cuba gives technical training and financial support to terrorist groups on a regular basis. Some terrorists are veterans who have learned their trade from military service in Vietnam. Others are skilled criminals, for whom burglary, assault and robbery are common practice. By holding up banks, armored cars and gun shops, as well as pilfering construction warehouses, they have been able to keep their organizations supplied with money, arms and explosives.

Representative Lawrence Smith (D-FL) stated in September, 1984 that:

Cuba, anchored by its bonds to the Soviet Union, maintains close relations with virtually every radical revolutionary group in the region, supplying training, money, weapons and counsel and providing the link between the revolutionaries and the Soviet Union... Cuba, seeks to be both the Mecca for subversives and the focal point for rallying governments against the United States.⁴⁴

HAVANA'S UNITED NATIONS CAMPAIGN

While on the one hand Castro uses terrorism, fear and intimidation in Puerto Rico, Havana simultaneously follows a separate diplomatic track. The diplomatic offensive is used to promote the cause of Puerto Rican independence while diverting international attention from the illegal and violent acts of Castro-sponsored terrorist groups.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Hon. Lawrence J. Smith (D-FL) "The Cuban Challenge," *The Congressional Record*, September 25, 1984, Vol. 122, p. 1.

The issue of Puerto Rican self-determination, if not properly understood in its historic context, lends itself to misinterpretation and political and propaganda exploitation. In order to create some perspective, let us review some facts. As previously mentioned, Puerto Rico was ceded to the United States by Spain under the Treaty of Paris (1898) which ended the Spanish American War. Under United States law, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States, controlled by the U.S. Congress. Under international law, however, Puerto Rico was considered a colony, and was recognized as such by the United States when it included the island in its list of non-self-governing territories which the United States submitted to the United Nations in 1946.

The status of the island changed in 1952 in the wake of popular elections, which established the Free Associated State (or Commonwealth) of Puerto Rico. One year later, the United Nations removed Puerto Rico from its list of non-self-governing territories, recognizing that the island's people had exercised their right of self-determination and achieved self-government. Subsequently, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly ratified this decision on two separate occasions, most recently in 1982.

Even the United Nations, which has evolved into a chronically anti-American organization, affirmed that Puerto Rico had achieved democratic self-determination. Thus, there is no issue of Puerto Rican independence. Washington resented Havana's repeated attempts to reopen the question. Such attempts may be constituted as interference in the domestic affairs of the United States, prohibited under Article 2 of the U.N. Charter. The United States has always maintained that the status of Puerto Rico is to be decided solely by the Puerto Ricans. The United States will respect, and abide by, the freely expressed will of the people of Puerto Rico.

Until recently, nearly everyone in Puerto Rico accepted this position. The significant exception was the Independentista movement, which maintains that the colonial status of Puerto Rico did not change in 1952, even with the island's assumption of the right to form its own government. In the Independentista view, Puerto Rico remained a colony under the political, economic, and military domination of the United States.

Since taking control of Cuba, Fidel Castro consistently sought a leadership role within the Third World. To this end, Havana has been an active participant in the various multilateral organizations. Castro has skillfully maneuvered within two different, but related arenas, the Non-Aligned Movement [NAM], and the United Nations system.

Castro took up the cause of Puerto Rican independence immediately upon assuming power. He began by manipulating United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 1960, which calls for the transfer of power to dependent peoples and which, through a quirk in the construction of the text, makes independence the only legitimate status resulting from an act of self-determination.⁴⁵

The Castro government raised the Puerto Rico issue at the Second Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Cairo, Egypt, October 5-10, 1964. Because Cuba wanted another group to support its initiative, Cuba arranged for a delegation representing "national liberation movements" in general. The delegation was led by Amílcar Cabral, a friend of Castro, and at that time leader of the Marxist guerrillas in Portuguese Guinea. The Cuban delegate to the Conference, President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, first mentioned Puerto Rico during his opening remarks to the Assembly. He asked for the independence of British Guyana (Belize), and then went on to say, "We ask for this Conference, so compactly behind the demand for the liquidation of colonialism, that it also demands the termination of colonial domination in Puerto Rico."⁴⁶

Cabral supplied an even stronger statement:

Within this framework of your complete solidarity with the national liberation of peoples, you have laid one of the keystones of the policy of non-alignment. You have also directly or indirectly given your fraternal help to the people of Cuba; of South Vietnam;

... Cyprus and the Congo... of Arab Palestine; and of the people of Puerto Rico, the small island often forgotten, where we are told that more than two-million human beings are still under the double imperial and colonial yoke and still fighting, notwithstanding the power which they are facing, for national independence.⁴⁷

As a result of these statements, and some lobbying behind the scenes, Havana was able to include a call upon the United Nations to examine the question of Puerto Rican independence in the final declaration of

⁴⁵ Bloomfield, *op. cit.* p. 103.

⁴⁶ Ministry of National Guidance Information Administration, Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries, Cairo, Egypt, October 5-10, 1964, (Cairo: National Publishing House, 1965) p. 235.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

the Conference. The Puerto Rican *Independentistas* were well represented at the Conference. The Cuban delegation included, among others, Laura Meneses de Albizu Campos, wife of Pedro Albizu Campos.⁴⁸ She was often asked to participate in international conferences as the Cuban representative with special responsibility for the "Puerto Rican question." The Marxist-oriented Pro-Independence Movement of Puerto Rico also participated in the Cairo summit, with the active support of Cuba.

Taking advantage of the momentum created by the Non-Aligned declaration, the Cuban government brought the NAM report to the United Nations. Raúl Roa, Castro's Foreign Minister, wrote a letter to Ambassador Seri Caulibali, President of the United Nations' Special Committee on Decolonization, known at the time as the "Committee of Twenty-four," requesting that the Committee accept the NAM Conference report and study the situation of Puerto Rico in the upcoming session. The United States tried to get the reference to Puerto Rico deleted from the report, but lost 16-7 in a vote which U.S. delegate Dwight Dickinson called "shocking."⁴⁹

The NAM report was not put on the agenda for the General Assembly by the Committee of Twenty-Four; however debate on the status of Puerto Rico was nevertheless introduced in the U.N. by the Cuban delegation: On December 11, 1964 Cuban Ambassador Ernesto [Ché] Guevara introduced it during a speech. He accused the United States of converting Puerto Rico into a hybrid nation and of using Puerto Rican soldiers as "cannon fodder" for "imperialist" wars such as Korea.⁵⁰ Little did he know that a few years later thousands of Cuban soldiers were to become real cannon fodder as Soviet proxies in Ethiopia, Angola and, more recently, in Nicaragua. The Chief of the U.S. Delegation, Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, responded by noting that less than three per cent of the Puerto Rican electorate favored independence from the United States. "[Stevenson] also inquired whether Cubans, 'oppressed by the betrayers of their revolution,' had been given the same right to choose."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Pedro Albizu Campos was a Puerto Rican pro independence activist with close ties to Cuba. He was the head of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, which was responsible for the shootings on Capitol Hill and an attempted assassination of President Harry S. Truman. See: Arturo Morales Carrión, *Puerto Rico: A Political and Cultural History*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1983) p. 277.

⁴⁹ Kathleen Teltsch, "Puerto Rico Issue Raised in U.N. Unit," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1964, p. 2.

⁵⁰ "Guevara, at U.N., Asserts U.S. is Planning Attack," *The New York Times*, December 12, 1964.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

The Cuban delegation tried to create an issue of Puerto Rico at the General Assembly meeting in 1965. This time it was Foreign Minister Raúl Roa's turn. Roa informed the international body that a conference was scheduled to take place in Havana in January, 1966. Its purpose would be to "plan joint action against Yankee imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism."⁵² *The New York Times* noted,

Mr. Roa, a small, bald man, gesticulated violently as abusive phrase followed abusive phrase. . . [He] demanded that the General Assembly demand the freedom and independence of Puerto Rico, now, in his words, "a colony of the United States," and "a stunted nation."⁵³

Roa's remarks were greeted with enthusiasm by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who leapt to his feet to shake the Cuban's hand. The U.S. Delegation, in an unprecedented move, left before the speech. Chief American delegate Arthur Goldberg, who had an idea of what Roa might be saying, decided to express American disapproval by removing all of his staff, with the exception of one junior Foreign Service Officer. It was the first time in twenty years that the American delegation had boycotted a General Assembly speech.

Ambassador Goldberg subsequently stated that the United States found:

unusually bizarre [Roa's] crocodile tears about the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. We do not see any exodus of Puerto Ricans to Cuba. We do see over 270,000 Cubans who have fled to the United States (23,000 to Puerto Rico alone) and many, many more Cubans who are waiting desperately for the chance to leave.⁵⁴

The Ambassador noted that in Puerto Rico, the people had been given the chance to vote for their political status, adding that, "By contrast, despite repeated promises by Fidel Castro, Cuba has yet to have a free election."⁵⁵

⁵² The complete text of Roa's remarks was reprinted in *Granma*, October 16, 1965, pp. 5,6.

⁵³ Drew Middleton, "Havana Will Call Anti-U.S. Meeting, Cuban Tells U.N.," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1965, pp. 1,6.

⁵⁴ "U.S. Walks Out in U.N. When Cuba Cites P.R.," *The San Juan Star*, October 16, 1965, pp. 1,14.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Meanwhile, Castro did indeed set up the organization referred to in Roa's vitriolic speech to the United Nations. In January, 1966 LASO, the Latin American Solidarity Organization, was established. Its first meeting was held in Havana. Members included Guadeloupe, Guyana, French Guiana, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Trinidad-Tobago, the Dominican Republic, Surinam and Puerto Rico. The conference passed a resolution calling for the independence of Puerto Rico. But the effect of the resolution was negligible, and as George Volsky has written, "LASO never took root, and by the early 1970's it seemed inoperative."⁵⁶ Havana, for the moment at least, had won some political points with nations that sent delegates to LASO. Trying to build a larger coalition, Raúl Roa once again brought up the subject of Puerto Rico at the United Nations. Speaking before the 20th General Assembly on October 18, 1966, the Cuban Foreign Minister delivered what *The New York Times* described as "a vituperative attack" against the United States.⁵⁷

Castro's annual manipulation of the issue of Puerto Rican independence at the U.N. and elsewhere was a source of great frustration for the United States. The Puerto Ricans themselves were irritated particularly since the overwhelming majority was not associated with, or sympathetic to the pro-independence or socialist movements on the island. Governor Luis Ferré continually explained to the United Nations that Puerto Rico did not need U.N. assistance, regardless of Fidel Castro's allegations. Governor Ferré even issued an invitation from San Juan to Fidel Castro. He could come to Puerto Rico, with as many guests as he liked, to examine for himself social and political conditions on the island. "My only condition," the Governor explained at a press conference, "is that, after he comes to Puerto Rico and goes wherever he may want to go and examines what he may want to examine, he consents to my doing the same thing in Cuba."⁵⁸

The Ferré invitation surprised both the White House and the State Department. There was no response from Castro or anyone in his government. Cuba persisted in its campaign against the United States and Puerto Rico.

⁵⁶ George Volsky, "The Eastern Caribbean," in Robert Wesson, ed., *Communism in Central America and the Caribbean*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1982) p. 136.

⁵⁷ Raymond Daniell, "Goldberg Urges Critics Test U.S.," *The New York Times*, October 19, 1966, p. 12.

⁵⁸ Dimas Planas, "Ferré Sends Invitation to Castro," *The San Juan Star*, May 21, 1971, pp. 1, 20.

In 1971, Castro's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ricardo Alarcón Quesada, wrote to the President of the General Assembly requesting that "the colonial case of Puerto Rico" be included as a supplementary item on the agenda of its 26th session. The request was denied. Because it made little headway in the United Nations, Havana brought the issue back to a more receptive audience, the Third World/socialist bloc.

An opportunity presented itself in May, 1972 at the Non-Aligned nations summit in Georgetown, Guyana. Speaking to a plenary session of that body, Raúl Roa called Puerto Rico "a nation that has been enslaved by Yankee imperialism for seventy-four years." Roa said that "U.S. Imperialism controls Puerto Rico's administration, monopolizes its wealth, exploits its people, and covers the country with military bases, in two of which atomic weapons are stored."⁵⁹ The conference passed the usual resolution recommending that the United Nations take up the issue.

The year 1972 was a watershed year for Castro and his Puerto Rican obsession. In the past Havana had been unable to engender any support for its resolutions in the Committee of Twenty-four. In 1972 the Cuban government was successful in persuading Iraq to introduce a resolution in the Committee which echoed Castro's call that Puerto Rico receive "self-determination" and "independence." Although the resolution managed to pass in Committee (the vote was 12-0 with 10 abstentions), the wording of the recommendation fell far short of what Havana, backed by the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, initially wanted. Had that wording been approved, Puerto Rico would have been classified by the Committee of Twenty-Four as a "colony," giving that body jurisdiction to open hearings on the island, and in the process embarrassing both Puerto Rico and the United States.

The U.S. responded by restating the statistics from the 1967 referendum held in Puerto Rico: votes for Commonwealth status — 425,081; votes for statehood — 273,315; and votes for independence — 4,205. Governor Ferré's immediate response to the UN resolution was: "Russia, China and Cuba have missed the point. What they should have sought at the United Nations is Cuba's freedom."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ "Resolution on Puerto Rico," and "Final Declaration," Documents of the Non-Aligned Conference: Georgetown, Guyana (Georgetown: Guyana Foreign Ministry, May, 1972)

⁶⁰ Kathleen Teltsch, "Puerto Rican Sovereignty Backed in U.N.," *The New York Times*, August 29, 1972, p. 6.

The following week, Governor Ferré issued his official statement to the press in response to the United Nations involvement. Speaking from the Hotel Biltmore, Ferré said that the government of Puerto Rico would "refuse to cooperate," and that any attempts by the Committee of Twenty-Four to hold hearings on the Island "would be completely out of place. We would view any such action as an interference in the internal affairs of Puerto Rico and the United States."⁶¹

This activity set the stage for a bitter showdown at the United Nations General Assembly that fall. On October 12, 1972 the Cuban delegate, Ricardo Alarcón Quesada, made the usual speech condemning "U.S. colonialism" and calling Puerto Rico "the last of the Latin American nations under colonial yoke."⁶² The tirade did not surprise any of the analysts there. There was surprise, however, when the U.S. delegation asked to address the issue. It was expected that the Chief of the U.S. Mission, Ambassador George Bush, would denounce the allegations of the Cuban delegation. Instead a Puerto Rican addressed the Assembly. Julia Rivera de Vincenti was the first Puerto Rican ever appointed to a United Nations Mission. In an impassioned and eloquent statement, Mrs. de Vincenti countered the arguments presented by Alarcón:

Perhaps the representative of Cuba, whose people have not seen the ballot box in more than a decade, simply does not understand the meaning of the free electoral process and other democratic institutions which mean so much to Puerto Rico. We in Puerto Rico know the meaning of self-determination which we have enjoyed and continue to enjoy, and we know from experience the meaning of freedom.⁶³

As one journalist put it, "In fiery Spanish, she told the Assembly that her people were tired of Cuban interference in the affairs of Puerto Rico."⁶⁴ The General Assembly used a procedural device enabling it to adjourn without voting on a Puerto Rico resolution.

After Castro lost yet another round at the United Nations he felt the

need to return to more congenial atmospheres, namely the Non-Aligned Nations Movement. At Cuban instigation, the Fourth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, called on the United Nations Decolonization Committee "to step up measures which would help the Puerto Rican people gain complete sovereignty and independence and recover their heritage."⁶⁵ It is significant that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), sponsored by Cuba, was granted permanent observer status in the NAM.

Castro, whose initiatives on Puerto Rico were continually stifled in the United Nations General Assembly, began to spend his political capital on the Committee of Twenty-Four, where the membership was much more sympathetic to Havana, and more likely to help Castro in his machinations. For example, although Cuba was not a member of the Committee of Twenty-Four, it was invited to participate in the 1973 discussions on decolonization. The Committee further agreed to hear statements from the PSP and the PIP. Then, at Cuba's behest, and in cooperation with Puerto Rican representatives, the Committee passed a resolution reaffirming the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence.

With most of the membership of the Decolonization Committee in Castro's favor, the Cuban initiative was more successful. In a move which was called "ludicrous" by Ambassador John Scali (former ABC correspondent and Chief of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations under President Richard Nixon), the Committee voted 12 to 2 to keep Puerto Rico under "continuous review."⁶⁶ This meant that they considered Puerto Rico a possible colony, and they would review the issue each year. The Puerto Rican response, issued by Governor Rafael Hernández Colón, was that since the United Nations General Assembly decided in 1953 that Puerto Rico had achieved self-governing status, this new resolution had "no legal or moral value whatsoever and was completely meaningless."⁶⁷

The following year, Fidel Castro's strength at the United Nations grew substantially. Beginning in 1974, Cuba replaced Venezuela on the Committee of Twenty-Four. From then on Cuba exerted greater influence in the United Nations.

In 1975, at Cuba's insistence, the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Countries issued a statement urging the United Nations to

⁶¹ "Puerto Rico's Chief Bans U.N. Inquiries" *The New York Times*, September 7, 1972, p. 24.

⁶² John D. Martz and Louis Schwartz, eds. *Latin America, the United States and the Inter-American System*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980) p. 131.

⁶³ Robert Alden, "U.S. Lashes Out at Cuba in U.N.," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1972, p. 3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Cole Blasier and Carmelo Mesa-Lago, eds., *op. cit.* pp. 123-124.

⁶⁶ Kathleen Teltsch, "U.N. Unit to Study Puerto Rico Issue," *The New York Times*, August 31, 1973, p. 14.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

recognize the "Puerto Rican National Liberation Movement" as the legitimate representative of the people of Puerto Rico. The Bureau also asked the Decolonization Committee to study a proposal to send a mission to investigate "the aforementioned territory under colonial domination."⁶⁸

Following the Non-Aligned Conference, Castro decided to bolster his position by holding a Conference of Communist Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean. The Conference expressed solidarity "with the Puerto Rican patriots persecuted by the colonial regime" (referring to Lebrón, Cancel, Flores and Collazo). The resolution continued: "we express our special solidarity with Lolita Lebrón, the Puerto Rican patriot, who is the oldest political prisoner on the continent, and who is a symbol of all who suffer imprisonment because of their ideas."⁶⁹

With two international bodies supporting his initiatives, Castro was able to bring the NAM's request straight to the United Nations. On August 14, 1975 hearings on the status of Puerto Rico were begun by the Committee of Twenty-Four. Testimony was given by three Puerto Rican members of the PSP, including Juan Mari Bras, who told the Committee that the FBI, CIA, Secret Service and the Puerto Rican Police Department were all cooperating in the "persecution" of Puerto Ricans seeking sovereignty for the island.

The *New York Times* reported that, "Mr. Mari Bras paid tribute to 'Comrade Alarcón Quesada' [Castro's spokesman on the Committee], and said Cuba's support represented 'hope' for the cause of Puerto Rican independence."⁷⁰ A spokesman for the government of Puerto Rico asserted that such charges "have usually been instigated by the Cuban delegation, and supported by a variety of Communist and Third World countries." In fact, Alarcón did spend much time with the Puerto Rican witnesses before they were called before the Committee.⁷¹

The day following the special hearings, the Committee met to discuss further action. Cuba together with the Congo, Iraq, Mali, and Syria sponsored a resolution which asked the United States to stop the persecution of Puerto Rican individuals, political parties, organizations and institutions dedicated to the "liberation" of their country; and to recognize "the national liberation movement of Puerto Rico" as the only represen-

tative of "the legitimate aspirations of the people of Puerto Rico." The Cuban delegation wanted to include a recommendation that the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, like the Palestine Liberation Organization, be accorded permanent observer status at the United Nations, but was dissuaded from doing so after various African members on the Committee "opposed the request and induced Cuba and the co-sponsors of the text to tone it down."⁷²

On late Friday night [August 17, 1975], it appeared that Castro would finally succeed in embarrassing the United States by having Puerto Rico labelled a colony by a committee of the United Nations. The vote was scheduled for Monday morning. The United States Mission had informed each member of the Committee of Twenty-Four that passage of the Cuban resolution would be deemed an "unfriendly act" by Washington. When Alarcón Quesada returned to the meeting room Monday morning, August 20, he found much to his surprise, that Australia [one of only six nations on the Committee that could boast a democratically-elected government] had moved to adjourn the Committee for the year without voting on the resolution. He was even more surprised when the motion to adjourn was passed by a vote of 11 to 9, with two abstentions and two absences. The United States had won a diplomatic victory in the UN fight over Puerto Rico.⁷³

At Cuba's invitation, Castro brought the World Peace Council to Havana for an international conference on Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico, was held during the second week of September, 1975. It was presided over by Juan Marinello, President of the Cuban chapter of the World Peace Council and a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the Conference on September 5, Marinello said, "At this great hour of need, the action of all the peoples of the world must be added to the action of the people of Puerto Rico. . . . It is our duty to bring about the broadest possible solidarity, aimed at the real and immediate liberation of the Puerto Rican nation."⁷⁴

The Conference closed on September 8, with a dramatic finale, presided over by Fidel Castro, and held at a school in Güines named *La Escuela*

⁶⁸ Black, et. al., *Area Handbook*, p. 345-352.

⁶⁹ "Declaración de la Conferencia de los Partidos Comunistas de América Latina y el Caribe," *Granma*, June 16, 1975, pp. 2-5.

⁷⁰ Paul Hoffman, "Three Puerto Ricans in U.N. Assail U.S. Rule" *The New York Times*, August 15, 1975, p. 6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Paul Hoffman, "U.N. Action Asked on Puerto Rico," *The New York Times*, August 16, 1975.

⁷³ Paul Hoffman, "U.S. Wins a U.N. Victory on Puerto Rico," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1975, pp. 1,9.

⁷⁴ "Palabras de Juan Marinello en la Inauguración de la Conferencia Internacional de Solidaridad con la Independencia de Puerto Rico" *Granma*, September 6, 1975, pp. 1-2.

Pedro Albizu Campos, in honor of the late Marxist leader of the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico. The main event was a long speech by Cuban President Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado, entirely dedicated to "the colonial situation in Puerto Rico." He stated:

The history of the handling of the Puerto Rican case in the United Nations, in which the progressive forces attained victory (having the question discussed by the Committee of Twenty-Four), is current, and we must refer to it, especially because of the participation that the Cuban Revolutionary Government had in it, through a conduct that will not be changed and that will never be regretted. . . . Throughout history, the ties between the peoples of Puerto Rico and Cuba have been forged under exceptional conditions: Both nations' struggles have been a part of the same process.⁷⁵

On September 4, 1975, *Granma* announced that the Conference would receive delegations from seventy-five countries and sixteen international organizations. The event was described as "a denunciation of North American imperialism which, by means of a lackey colonial government, has maintained the subjugation of the Puerto Rican people since 1898."⁷⁶ By itself, this conference would not have raised too many eyebrows in Washington or San Juan; there was nothing in the program that had not been heard before. However, around the same time the conference was being held, it became widely known that Fidel Castro was involved in sending about one-eighth of his standing army to Angola to support the MPLA, a Marxist liberation movement which had been participating in the independence struggle that drove the Portuguese from that African nation. Cuba's role in third world insurgencies had grown substantially.

Taking into account constant UN and third world action on Puerto Rico, and Castro's aggressive activity in Africa, the United States re-evaluated the policy which had been aimed at improving relations with Havana. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger declared, "We were making

⁷⁵ "Discurso Pronunciado por el Doctor Osvaldo Dorticós Torrado" *Granma*, September 9, 1975, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁶ "Inaugurará Hoy el Dr. Juan Marinello la Conferencia Internacional de Solidaridad con la Independencia de Puerto Rico" *Granma*, September 4, 1975, p. 1.

progress earlier this year in improving relations with Cuba. But the [Puerto Rico and Angola issues] . . . have given us some pause."⁷⁷

The United States was not encouraged, when the issue of Puerto Rico once again took a prominent place on the agenda of the Fifth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations, May 16-19, 1976. As in the past, the Cuban delegation urged the Conference to recognize the "Puerto Rican National Liberation Movement" as the only legitimate representative of the Puerto Rican people. The move failed, however, and the Conference once again pressed the United Nations to take up the issue of Puerto Rico in the upcoming session.

The Ford Administration took a more forceful approach because of Havana's insistence on pressing the issue of Puerto Rico. On the eve of the Economic Summit meeting held in San Juan in the Spring of 1976, President Ford made a statement to the press. It was a clear warning to Havana, and others trying to use the United Nations to meddle in the internal affairs of the United States.

There are those who seek to distort the facts, to mislead others about our relationship to Puerto Rico. Those who might be inclined to interfere in our freely-determined relations should know that such an act will be considered intervention in the domestic affairs of Puerto Rico and of the United States . . . an unfriendly act which will be resisted by appropriate means.⁷⁸

Undaunted by the President's warning, Cuban Foreign Minister Isidoro Malmierca Peoli denounced U.S. "colonialism" and "militarism" in Puerto Rico at the inaugural ceremony of the second meeting of the Committee for Development and Cooperation in the Caribbean, in early 1977. On August 17, 1977, Cuba again introduced a draft resolution in the U.N. Committee of Twenty-Four which asked the United States "to take immediate steps so that the people of Puerto Rico can fully exercise their political rights."⁷⁹

The Committee postponed action on the draft resolution. However,

⁷⁷ John B. Martin, *United States Policy in the Caribbean*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), p. 209.

⁷⁸ Paul Hoffman, "Ford Warns Cuba on Puerto Rico," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1976, pp. 1, 3.

⁷⁹ "Puerto Rican Rivals Join at U.N. in Criticism of U.S." *The New York Times*, August 18, 1977, p. 2.

there were two important developments that complicated debate over the issue. First, the new Puerto Rican Governor, Carlos Romero Barceló, decided to change strategy in defending Puerto Rico's Commonwealth status during United Nations debate. Secondly, some pro-statehood politicians joined forces with the pro-independence groups "to support the Cuban resolution in the belief that Puerto Ricans will choose statehood over independence if their status as a commonwealth is discredited at the United Nations."⁸⁰

Castro began to feel more confident with regard to the Puerto Rican issue. In an impassioned speech before the Cuban National Assembly on December 25, 1977 he stated:

They [the United States] no longer talk about subversion in Latin America. Now they talk about other things, for example the problem of Puerto Rico, the independence of Puerto Rico, a right that we have historically defended, and while they argue their theories we argue our own. But above all, we have implanted the idea that this is a question of principles. We do not promote violence in Puerto Rico, but when the Cuban Revolutionary Party was founded, it was founded for the independence of both Cuba and Puerto Rico. We have historical, moral and sacred ties to Puerto Rico. And we have told them, as long as there is a Puerto Rican who defends the idea of independence, while there is just one, we have a moral and political duty to support the idea of independence for Puerto Rico. And we will fulfill this moral and political debt. It doesn't matter if there are three Puerto Ricans or three-million who support his independence, it is enough that there is just one. And we have told them very clearly that this is a question of principles, and when it comes to our principles, we do not negotiate.⁸¹

The Cuban delegation united the leadership of the PSP, the PIP, and the Popular Democratic Party of Puerto Rico (PDP) which supports Commonwealth status. Together they pushed for a resolution by the Committee

of Twenty-Four calling for the transfer of all political powers to the people of Puerto Rico and stating that any form of free association between Puerto Rico and the United States must be in terms of political equality.

In 1979, Havana again led debate in the United Nations Decolonization Committee on a resolution passed by a vote of 11 to 0 (with 12 abstentions) which: (1) reaffirmed the right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence; (2) noted the failure of the United States to comply with previous Committee resolutions; (3) declared that any such measures or prepared consultations held in Puerto Rico must be implemented under conditions of full political equality; (4) condemned the "persecution, harassment and repressive measures" against independence advocates and called for a fact-finding mission to Puerto Rico to investigate alleged persecution of independence advocates; (5) urged the release of the four Nationalist prisoners [Lebrón, Collazo, Cancel, and Flores]; (6) demanded that the U.S. armed forces cease operations on the island of Vieques; (7) affirmed the right of the people of Puerto Rico to their off-shore resources; and (8) decided to keep the question of Puerto Rico under continuous review.

In September, 1979 Castro hosted the Sixth Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Havana. As host nation, Cuba had great influence in the drafting of documents that resulted from the Conference. Castro used the opportunity to draft a harsh resolution regarding Puerto Rico. The resolution severely criticized the United States. It called on Washington "to refrain from any political or repressive maneuvers that tend to perpetuate the colonial status of Puerto Rico. . . and [the NAM] demanded the transfer of powers to the people of the territory so they can freely determine their future political status."⁸²

One interesting aspect of the 1979 General Assembly meeting which followed the NAM Conference in Havana was that Nicaragua made clear its adherence to Havana's foreign policy agenda. Speaking on September 28, Nicaraguan delegate Daniel Ortega Saavedra [currently the President of Nicaragua] recited Castro's view on Puerto Rico, saying that Puerto Ricans' human rights were being violated by the continuing American naval presence on Vieques island, and by non-recognition of the people's right to independence.⁸³

The following year Cuba and Iraq presented a joint resolution to the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸¹ "Conclusiones del Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz," *Granma*, December 26, 1977, pp. 1-4.

⁸² Pastor, P. 112.

⁸³ Reuter's Wire Service, "Nicaragua Says it Will Repudiate Somoza-era Debt," September 28, 1979.

Committee of Twenty-Four. Its intent was to keep Puerto Rico under continuous review. As in previous years, the resolution passed the Committee but was not introduced in the General Assembly. But Havana was still searching for some mechanism to bring the issue out of the "safe" Committee of Twenty-Four, and have it debated in the General Assembly. On August 20, 1981 the Cuban delegation pushed a resolution through in the Committee of Twenty-Four which recommended that the General Assembly take up the issue of Puerto Rico as a separate item on its 1982 agenda. The resolution, sponsored by Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq was successful, by a vote of 11 to 2, with 11 abstentions.⁸⁴

In September 1982, Cuban Ambassador Raúl Roa (son of the former Foreign Minister) presented and defended still another resolution before the General Committee, which establishes the agenda of the General Assembly; it argued that there was discontent in Puerto Rico with its present status. After lobbying by both the Cuban and American delegations, the Committee refused the Cuban recommendation by a vote of 11 to 7. Cuba appealed the Committee's decision to the General Assembly.

In responding to the Cuban efforts in the United Nations, the U.S. Delegation followed the successful strategy adopted a decade earlier. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick designated a member of the U.S. Mission, Dr. Hernán Padilla, a physician serving as elected Mayor of San Juan, to respond on behalf of the United States. In an impassioned speech, Mayor Padilla eloquently stated the Puerto Rican case:

Puerto Rico is not an international problem, nor does it want to be. We have the capability, the democratic experience and the legal legislative mechanism for consulting the people. . . . We respectfully request that you (the members of the UN General Assembly) unite with us to support the decision of the General Committee to reject the inscription of the question of Puerto Rico on the agenda of the General Assembly. Our democratic system does not need the intervention of the international community. We Puerto Ricans, and only we, will decide how, and when, our political status will be altered.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ "U.N. Group Asks Review of Puerto Rico's Status," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1981, p. 5.

⁸⁵ From a speech read to the United Nations General Assembly by Dr. Hernán Padilla, September 24, 1982.

After a diplomatic battle, which analysts describe as one of Ambassador Kirkpatrick's most difficult, the General Assembly rejected the Cuban appeal, sustaining the General Committee's decision by a vote of 70 to 30, with 43 abstentions. As Robert Pastor writes:

Cuba did not press the issue in the UN General Assembly in 1983 or 1984, but the debate and the resolutions passed by the Committee of 24 followed the pattern of previous years with one important difference. In August 1984, for the first time, Venezuela introduced with Cuba a resolution reaffirming Puerto Rico's right to self-determination and independence'. The resolution eschewed the rhetoric about U.S. colonialism and repression. Cuba evidently preferred to accept a milder resolution as a trade off for having Venezuela's co-sponsorship.⁸⁶

SUMMARY

A few observations with respect to this analysis are in order:

1. Throughout the period under review, the Castro government has been in the forefront of a campaign to effect "self-determination and independence" for the people of Puerto Rico.
2. This campaign was started during the 1960's in the friendly and manageable forums of the Non-Aligned Movement and Communist Party Congresses. Cuba extended this campaign in the 1970's and 1980's to the United Nations making more vehement accusations and urging more provocative resolutions.
3. The campaign has been cleverly orchestrated. Pro-independence groups on the island, especially the Puerto Rican Socialist Party, have been the main source of information and documents. These groups have provided a resource base for the Cuban resolutions. These resolutions were passed on to friendly forums such as the Non-Aligned Conferences for initial approval with a request that the issue be brought to the attention of the UN Decolonization Committee. At the United Nations, Cuba has always been a spokesman and advocate of the Non-Aligned organization. As a result, the preambles of resolutions generated by the Committee of Twenty-Four invariably

⁸⁶ Bloomfield, *op. cit.* p. 112.

carry references to some previous action or recommendation of the NAM or some other body. As noted in this paper, the year 1975 provides an excellent example of these maneuvers.

Cuba, however, has not been all that successful. As Deputy Permanent Representative of the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, Ambassador José S. Sorzano pointed out: "The NAM, prompted by Cuba, can be counted upon to write periodic communiqués attacking the U.S. stand on the question of Puerto Rico." But the same nations that support the "consensus", non-binding NAM declarations, vote in the UN against the NAM position on Puerto Rico. Thus, in the last General Assembly [referring to 1982] the United States not only defeated Cuba in the number of total votes, but, even *within* the NAM, the United States defeated the Cuban position. "Only the hard-core Soviet bloc voted with the Cubans."⁸⁷

4. Havana's campaign on Puerto Rico is littered with errors, exaggerations, and distortions. For example, Cuban resolutions have called for recognition of the National Liberation Movement as the legitimate representative of the people of Puerto Rico. But such a group does not even exist. Pro-independence sentiment is espoused in Puerto Rico by several organizations, but none of them carry this name.

Cuba has consistently falsified facts about social and economic conditions in Puerto Rico. Actually, Puerto Rico has one of the highest standards of living in Latin America. In terms of social and economic indicators, the people of Puerto Rico enjoy a much higher standard of living than the Cubans, who have been subjected to severe rationing for over two decades. Moreover, Cuba today has one of the highest per-capita debts in the Western Hemisphere. Indeed, Castro's claim that Puerto Rico is a U.S. colony seems all the more ludicrous when one considers that 86% of all Cuban exports now go to the Soviet Union and 98% of all Cuba's oil now comes from the Soviet Union.⁸⁸ The USSR currently purchases Cuban sugar at four to five times the world market price and Cuban Five Year Plans are drawn-up "jointly" with the Soviets. The Castro regime would be economically nonviable without its annual \$4.9 billion subsidy from the

⁸⁷ "Comment," Amb. José S. Sorzano, in Bloomfield, *op. cit.* p. 138.

⁸⁸ The CIA figure for 1983 (the most current) is that 90% of Cuba's oil comes directly from the Soviet Union, and the remaining 10% comes to Cuba indirectly through Venezuela. The 90% figure represents 225 thousand barrels per day.

Soviets. In fact, recent Cuban documents prepared for their debt rescheduling efforts show that the Cuban economy has serious difficulties.⁸⁹

5. By linking self-determination with independence in resolution after resolution and speech after speech, the Castro regime has succeeded in confusing the meanings of the two words. In many quarters, "self-determination" is now a code word for "independence." Free association and statehood are not recognized by many as equally valid criteria for the principle of self-determination.

In fact, Castro's argument that Puerto Rico has the right to self-determination and independence is redundant. All nations presently have this right under the principles of self-determination espoused in the Charter of the United Nations. They also have the right to commonwealth status, free association, statehood, integration with another nation, annexation, or any number of other legal associations prescribed by UN Resolution 1541.

6. Castro has called for the complete transfer of Puerto Rican political power from the United States to Puerto Rico, on the grounds that a people must be completely free before deciding their status.

The United States has given Puerto Rico the opportunity to decide its status in freely held elections at least twice. Puerto Rico has chosen to remain a Commonwealth of the United States.

But Castro's Cuba itself has yet to hold free, national elections, and the regime in Havana does not recognize freedom of the press, or any of the other liberties enjoyed by the people of Puerto Rico. Thus, Cuba can hardly be regarded as a spokesman for the Island's independence.

There is no question that the people of Puerto Rico can better and more freely determine their own political future than the people of Cuba, who are ruled by a totalitarian, communist dictatorship.

7. The people of Puerto Rico are free to decide their final status. If Castro truly believes in the principles of self-determination, he should let this process run its course without outside interference. Let the Puerto Ricans decide their own future. Castro's diplomatic campaign loses all credibility when we realize that he trains, funds and supplies terrorist organizations who steal from, injure and murder the very Puerto Ricans that he is purportedly trying to help.

⁸⁹ Cuban American National Foundation, *Cuba's Financial Crisis: The Secret Report from the National Bank of Cuba*, (Washington, D.C.: 1985).

8. Contrary to Fidel Castro's assertions, the people of Puerto Rico are not being exploited by the United States. In fact, U.S. assistance to the Island has been generous. Federal aid to the Island amounts to billions of dollars annually. [\$2.3 billion annually, \$5.8 billion including individual transfers such as welfare payments.]†
9. The people of Puerto Rico have expressed themselves in the plebiscite of 1967 and in subsequent elections. The population remains overwhelmingly in favor of some form of close association with the United States (free association or statehood). In the latest elections (1984) the two pro-independence parties together received less than 4% of the vote. It would hardly serve the objectives of self-determination to force on a people a political status that was rejected by 96% of the electorate. The following table demonstrates the decline of pro-independence sentiment in Puerto Rico in the last quarter-century:⁹⁰

Voting Patterns on the Status Issue*			
	% of Votes Supporting Commonwealth	% of Votes Supporting Statehood	% of Votes Supporting Independence
1952	67.1	13.3	19.6
1956	62.5	25.0	12.5
1960	58.2	31.1	3.1
1964	61.4	35.8	2.8
1968	52.3	44.9	2.8
1972	51.5	44.0	4.5
1976	45.3	48.3	6.4
1980	47.0	47.2	5.8
1984	47.2	44.2	3.5

⁹⁰ Figures reported by the Puerto Rican Elections Commission on February 13, 1985. The Renovation Party, which has already dissolved, was an offshoot of the PNP and polled only 2.13% in the last election.

* From time to time small political parties not identified with the status issue participated in elections. As a result totals do not add to 100% in every election.

† Based on 1985 figures compiled by the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Bureau, Washington, D.C.

10. It is not true that policy-makers in the United States feel that Puerto Rico is, or should be, subordinate to the mainland. Many feel great respect for the way in which Puerto Rico has developed within its associated free state framework. Witness the remarks of Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, who as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations visited San Juan for a Fourth of July celebration in 1982:

There are those...who may wish to argue that Puerto Rico's leading position on any scale of development is an artificial one exclusively the result of the transfer of Federal funds. That conclusion, however, is contrary to all available evidence. Unfortunately, the world is full of examples of nations which have received millions upon millions of dollars in external assistance with little or no discernible effect on their development...Money, therefore, is not sufficient either to start or to maintain economic development. If it were, many more countries would today be fully developed. The undeniable progress of Puerto Rico, therefore, is not merely the result of an infusion of dollars. It is, rather, the result of the skillful abilities of successive Puerto Rican administrations and, ultimately, the work, capacity and aspirations of the Puerto Rican people. They, too, have to be recognized.⁹¹

Congressman Bill Richardson, (D-NM), former Chairman of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, recently wrote that the Puerto Rican issue is of growing importance in the political considerations of non-Puerto Rican Hispanics. According to Richardson, "Hispanics, along with other Americans, are becoming increasingly educated about it [the issue of Puerto Rico], and they believe that Puerto Ricans must be guaranteed the right of self-determination."⁹²

11. At present, differences over Puerto Rico represent one of several obstacles in any attempt to improve U.S.-Cuban relations. The United States demands that Castro stop interfering in the internal affairs of Puerto Rico, a sentiment repeatedly expressed by U.S. officials. In 1975, for example, Assistant Secretary of State William Rogers told a Senate subcommittee: "We are concerned with Cuba's attitude about Puerto Rico and we are concerned whether Cuba plans

⁹¹ From a speech by former U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 4, 1982.

⁹² Hon. Bill Richardson (D-NM), "Hispanic American Concerns" *Foreign Policy*, no. 60, Fall 1985, p. 37.

to follow a clear policy of nonintervention everywhere in the Hemisphere. . . . I would say that if Cuba wants to normalize its relationship with us, Cuba should indicate this in deed as well as word."⁹³ Cuba, however, insists that its aid to independence forces in Puerto Rico is non-negotiable.

12. The refusal of the U.N. General Assembly in 1982 to take up the Puerto Rican question as a separate item on its agenda does not represent the end of Fidel Castro's campaign. In fact, Havana has vowed to continue the campaign in future years.

CONCLUSIONS

In his effort to promote Puerto Rican "independence," Fidel Castro states that his concern is for the welfare of his "Puerto Rican brothers," fellow Hispanics who share the same history, culture and language but have not yet had the opportunity to blossom into nationhood. However, the fact that Havana identifies with the minuscule Puerto Rican Socialist Party, which is Marxist, rather than the more significant Puerto Rican Independence Party, which is social democratic, clearly indicates that Castro is not primarily concerned with fostering Puerto Rican sovereignty. He is interested in subversion.

The reasons for Castro's pursuit of the Puerto Rican issue are twofold: to promote revolutionary change in Puerto Rico while at the same time embarrassing his biggest adversary. To that end, the Castro regime follows two independent, but related tracks, one subversive and the other diplomatic.

The revolutionary, violent aspect of Castro's aid to Puerto Rican Marxists comes from his support of terrorism in Puerto Rico and on the mainland. He has trained, supplied, and protected Puerto Rican terrorist organizations since his assumption of power in 1959. The most recent example of this is the Wells Fargo robbery of 1983, which resulted in a Puerto Rican suspect finding refuge in Cuba. A large portion of the money also found its way to Cuba and is now "in the care of the Cuban government."

The second track followed by Havana is diplomatic, and is intended

to divert attention from its illegal support of terrorists. Initially, the Castro government proposed strong resolutions at a conference of the Non-Aligned Nations. After passage of NAM resolutions, the Cuban delegation at the United Nations took the recommendation to that body, and proposed them to the Special UN Committee on Decolonization, (then known as Committee of Twenty-Four). In the 1960's, resolutions such as the one on Puerto Rico declaring the island a colony of the United States did not make much headway in the Committee. More recently, however, they have passed the Committee after more radical nations, including Cuba, have assumed seats on the Committee of Twenty-Four. The Committee has recommended that the General Assembly study the question, but to date, despite some bitter rhetorical contests on the General Assembly floor, U.S. diplomatic moves have prevented action.

Castro's motivations in interfering in U.S.-Puerto Rican relations are twofold: (1) to remove the United States politically, economically and strategically from Puerto Rico, and (2) to promote the aims of international communism in the Caribbean Basin.

The United States has significant investments in Puerto Rico, which, after Canada and Mexico, is the largest U.S. trading partner in this hemisphere. Furthermore, the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base, located on the eastern shore of Puerto Rico, is the largest such installation in the Caribbean. It serves the vital function of keeping U.S., NATO and other allied naval forces in a constant state of readiness.

On the northwest corner of Puerto Rico lies the now defunct Strategic Air Command, Ramey Air Force Base. The United States returned the base to Puerto Rico for civilian use, but retains the right to reactivate it if the situation warrants. The facility is currently used for refueling aircraft and for electronic intelligence. Combined with Guantánamo (in Cuba) these facilities enable the United States to protect the Caribbean Basin, an area vital to the defense of both the United States and Puerto Rico, as well as our allies in the region.

By promoting Puerto Rican independence, Castro hopes to embarrass the United States and also eventually, drive the U.S. from the Island. The Cuban campaign against "U.S. militarism" in Puerto Rico has an obvious geopolitical and strategic significance.

Havana's campaign also has an ideological motivation: the promotion of international communist aims in the region. Article 12 of the Cuban Constitution of 1976 states that "Cuba aspires to integrate itself with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean...in a great community of peoples united by historical tradition and a common struggle

⁹³ U.S. Congress, House Committee on International Relations, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Trade and Commerce, and the Subcommittee on International Organizations, *U.S. Trade Embargo of Cuba*. (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1976), pp. 155, 363-364.

against colonialism and imperialism."⁹⁴ The same article condemns wars initiated by other countries but sanctions those initiated by Cuba in the name of national liberation.

There is no question that the incorporation of Puerto Rico into the communist sphere would represent a major triumph for the Soviet Union. Puerto Rico is the wealthiest island in the region, and its loss would be a severe blow to American prestige and power. Furthermore, should the United States continue to ignore Castro's aggressive actions toward Puerto Rico, the U.S. would lose credibility as protector of smaller allies in the region.

From the Cuban and Soviet points of view, the acquisition of Puerto Rico would enhance their power in the Caribbean and in the world. Cuba continues to offer an ideal base for the Soviets to gather intelligence and other data. In the past, it has been used to export subversion, sabotage and guerrilla warfare, not only to Puerto Rico but to Venezuela, Panama, Chile, Bolivia, Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador and many other nations. Castro, has objectives that go far beyond his quarrel with the United States. This combination of strategic, political and ideological motivations, coupled with the desire to embarrass the United States, forms the core of Fidel Castro's Puerto Rican obsession.

But perhaps the most important question one must ask in any meaningful study of Puerto Rico is: What would happen to the people of Puerto Rico if Castro should realize his goal, with the aid of the PSP and other Marxist and terrorist organizations?

Puerto Ricans watching what is happening in Nicaragua today are possibly receiving a preview, and it is grim indeed. While they watch Castro's efforts to establish a copy of his regime in Central America, they can clearly see what would happen if Castro's obsession turned Puerto Rico into a Marxist society. A Castro-style Puerto Rico would be a Puerto Rico without freedom of speech, freedom of the press and without the right to oppose the government in any manner. It would be a Puerto Rico devoid of any personal initiative or individual creativity. Political parties and labor unions would be disbanded. The religious would be persecuted, and the arts and humanities stifled.

⁹⁴ "Constitución de la República," *Op. Cit.*, Art. 12 (g).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although Fidel Castro's campaign to "liberate the sister island" is patently fraudulent, neither the U.S. government, or the government of Puerto Rico should underestimate its potential for damaging the amicable relationship between the people of the United States and the people of Puerto Rico. American policy makers must remain vigilant regarding Castro's efforts to manipulate foreign opinion and of his campaign to force a transformation of Puerto Rico's status.

The following actions could be taken to counter Castro's campaign:

1. The U.S. Department of Justice should continue to cooperate fully with the Puerto Rican Department of Justice regarding terrorist activity, both on the Island and on the mainland.
2. The U.S. Department of State should continue to carefully monitor Havana's diplomatic activity concerning Puerto Rico. It should be prepared to counter the accusations of the Castro regime in all international forums, and continue to present Puerto Rican election results in all relevant international forums.
3. The United States Information Agency should utilize various mediums (film, television, radio and print) to counter Havana's disinformation campaign. These productions should emphasize facts about Puerto Rico's history and culture, its intellectual contributions, and its political and social freedoms. They should also point out that the Puerto Rican electorate has democratically decided the status of the island, and that the vast majority of its citizens continuously vote for either commonwealth or statehood status.
4. The USIA could further promote educational and cultural visits by Latin American and European opinion and policy-makers to Puerto Rico. Politicians, journalists, educators and others would see for themselves the reality of Puerto Rico.
5. The Government of Puerto Rico should also take every opportunity to inform foreign opinion makers and others about its cultural and historical richness, and illustrate the workings of its democratic form of government. Traveling exhibitions might also be prepared and sent to nations in Latin America to inform and educate those who are not able to travel to Puerto Rico.

6. The U.S. Coast Guard should increase its presence around Puerto Rico's large coastal area, to supplement the Puerto Rican authorities, who have limited resources. This would help monitor and discourage drug traffic coming from Cuba via the Caribbean to Puerto Rico (a most important mission given Castro's use of the drug trade as a means of financing terrorist activity abroad).
7. U.S. displeasure over Castro's manipulation of the Puerto Rico question should remain at the top of the United States' agenda for Cuba. It should not be treated intermittently. Using Castro's own strategy, the U.S. should remind the international community of Havana's illegal interference at every opportunity.
8. The United States Congress should reaffirm its position that the status of Puerto Rico is an issue that only the people of that Island, through democratic vote, can decide, and that whatever the decision made by the people of Puerto Rico, the U.S. will honor it.
9. The United States must develop a specific policy developed to defuse Castro's aggressive campaign to undermine Puerto Rico's government and its relationship with the United States. The absence of a vigorous response by the United States to Havana's continuing offensives against Puerto Rico and its people endangers the security of the island and America's credibility as a strong and dependable friend and ally.
10. Finally, with respect to the U.S.-Puerto Rican relationship, Washington should continue its efforts to maintain a healthy economy on the island. This would undermine Castro's efforts, while boosting American credibility around the world as a free market economy and a model of democracy.

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